

*** TRANSCRIPT ***

Novilhos Brazilian Steakhouse cooks up cross promotions for Valentine's Day marketing

Podcast interview with Elle Barksdale, Marketing Director for Novilhos Brazilian Steakhouse; and Janelle Kozyra, member of the Kimco Realty blogging team

Janelle: Greetings everyone, Janelle Kozyra here, member of the Kimco blogging team. Today I am joined by Kimco tenant Elle Barksdale, who is the Marketing Director for Novilhos, which is a Brazilian steakhouse in the Kimco portfolio located in the Marketplace at Factoria shopping center in Washington State. Elle, it's great to have you with us today. Thanks for joining.

Elle: Thank you and we appreciate the opportunity.

Janelle: So we are joined together because Elle has some promotions cooking for Valentine's Day this year and we wanted to talk about what she has on deck and why she has put them together and sort of her strategy and some unique insights behind that that she might be able to share with us today. So Elle, before we get started in getting into the promotions, let's just get a little bit more background on Novilhos. So tell us about the restaurant.

Elle: Well Novilhos has been in the location that we currently sit for two and a half years. Our restaurant is a unique design. It's a unique concept. We have gauchos, which are Brazilian cowboys (and Brazilians are of course Portuguese), that come around and give tableside service. And we carve the meats at your table. Everything is all you can eat.

We also feature a salad bar that has over 60 items on there, including salmon at night time, so we're unique in the sense that we're not like an American steakhouse, where you go and you order from a menu. We actually don't have a menu.

We have 17 different varieties of meat, and it just comes around and you control your service by the flip of a coin. Red means no, and green means yes, you want more, go. And you flip that coin back and forth and you start and stop your service and you keep doing that until you're ready to go.

Janelle: And how important is Valentine's Day to your business?

Elle: Valentine's Day is extremely important, I feel, just because we're not a romantic establishment. I don't think people view us as that because of all the activity and the noise that's going on. People are talking. And so when Valentine's Day comes around, I really try to let people know that this is a place that you can come to.

We set up tables for two. And I like to do really special things during Valentine's Day just because people might not make us their #1 choice, and think, oh it's not a romantic evening, or it can't be, when it really can be, because we do like to settle things down, turn the music a little bit lower, and set the ambiance just right so they do get that feel.

Janelle: Can you tell us about the promotions that you're running this year to attract patrons and if you have any special menu that you're offering this year?

Elle: Certainly. The menu is not going to be any different. We'll still have our regular menu. And our promotions are really fun this year. I pitched them myself. I decided that people like to get away sometimes and people may have kids and their schedules may not permit or money may be an option. This year, I decided to purchase and give away a one-night stay for two at the Hyatt Regency in Bellevue.

And also as a second giveaway, we're doing a one-night stay for two at the Alta Resort. It's a honeymoon suite, actually, and that's located in Crystal Mountain. And the third giveaway is spa time at Helen's Salon and Wax Spa in Bellevue. She's done a gift certificate that will give a one-hour facial and also a haircut of their choice or hair design, and a waxing of their choice.

Janelle: How did you decide to pick those giveaways, and work with those businesses, including the spa?

Elle: I chose the Hyatt because there may be some locals that don't want to leave the area. So I wanted to give that as an option. They can stay close to home or whatnot and still have a getaway for a night.

And then the other one in Crystal Mountain, the owner really likes that area up there and finds it highly romantic and says if you can't put someone on an airplane, they can just go ahead and take a romantic drive and stay in a honeymoon suite and do it all over again. Or you don't have to be married of course.

And the third one, I get a lot of spa services, and give a lot of business to Helen's Salon and Wax, and she's a small business, local owner. I just thought it would be really nice to link up with her and pass her services on. She's excellent and she's a #1 rated spa service in Bellevue.

Janelle: Are there insights you could give us into your process for coordinating all your efforts with these other businesses and some of the maybe cross-promotional efforts you're doing? Is there anything that would be good for other businesses out there to know if they wanted to coordinate with other businesses in their area, whether they be national chains or the smaller shops out there. Anything from a process standpoint or just from a business standpoint on tips for coordinating something like this?

Elle: Well, my friends ask me that. I let them know everybody needs time. So I'd say if you have anything in mind, like this Valentine's Day, for instance, I'm going to start planning for next Valentine's Day next month. So I always give people ample notice, send out my letters and my requests eight months in advance.

Between that, I always go out and maybe have a happy hour with some of the locals or friends. I consider them both business relationships and friends. That way, it's always easier to keep that conversation, when it does arise, it's easier to let it flow. Relationship building is really strong in small businesses.

Keeping in touch and not only reaching out the moment you need something, and seeing if they need something as well. If there's anything I can do on my end for them. I've even sent out little Starbucks cards so they have a coffee in the morning. Sometimes that's not even really, not expecting anything in return, but just to say, here you go. That would be my tips.

Janelle: How long have you been doing Valentine's Day-oriented promotions?

Elle: I would say just two years working with this company, and the company I worked for prior to this, it wasn't something that we engaged in necessarily.

Janelle: So from your perspective, with just your experience at Novilhos, what do you think you've learned the most about doing promotions around Valentine's Day?

Elle: Probably just thinking and looking at what I did last year, and looking at the response that we received, and talking to our customers. We did a promotion last year, of course, and now I know what people want this year.

I got insight from them, going around the tables and just conversing and following up with our customers, seeing what they want. That's how I tied that into how I decided to do this Valentine's Day.

Janelle: How are your customers entering your giveaway this year?

Elle: This year they basically just make a reservation for Valentine's Day. So we said all the reservations that are made for Valentine's Day will automatically be entered into our giveaway. I really want to do the giveaway that night, but I've got to see how that pans out because the tables turnover, so it will most likely be the next day. So they're just automatically entered. There's no fee or anything like that, and we just pull their name and we'll contact the winners.

Janelle: How are you using any online or social platforms out there to help you promote your Valentine's Day giveaways?

Elle: We've teamed up just recently with our local radio station and we decided to run some ads via that route, with radio. And also we've done a lot of paid Facebook advertising, and so I've just gotten done doing some Google ad words as well.

We'll also advertise on our website. All of the employees that work for Novilhos, including myself, put links and pictures of our Valentine's Day promotions on our personal Facebook pages as well. And a lot of word-of-mouth. Our hostess is letting people know when they leave the restaurant. They'll get little flyers that go out with them, as well as promoting inside of our checkbooks. And Twitter of course.

Janelle: What has the response been like, if you can share that?

Elle: Oh the response has gone well. I've even received emails just asking if I could go ahead and put reservations in for some of our customers that deal with me on a case-by-case basis or even just saying hello.

But I think what we're doing so far is really great because we also have Open Tables advertising for us as well, and I can't tell you because I'm not looking at it right now at this moment, but when I did look at it last week, we had about 150 reservations already for Valentine's Day and we're not even in February.

Janelle: And how many tables do you have at Novilhos?

Elle: Well, we have right now 200. We can seat up to 260 people. But last Valentine's Day we ended up ordering 30 extra tables that would seat of course two. But this year we ordered 50 extra tables, so hopefully that'll be enough.

Janelle: Great. Well, it sounds like you are all set for a happy Valentine's Day at Novilhos.

Elle: I'm excited to see how it all pans out and see the happy winners overall.

Janelle: Well, Elle, it was great talking with you. Thanks for sharing some of your insights on Valentine's Day at Novilhos.

Elle: Of course, and again, we appreciate the opportunity, and thank you.